

## **High court rules against legal challenges to Greek govt's ban on worshipers during Wed. Epiphany services**



**The Council of State (CoS), Greece's top administrative court, has ruled against legal challenges by individual citizens seeking to rescind a government decision - abruptly issued last Friday - banning the presence of worshipers from Wednesday's great Epiphany services in Orthodox places of worship around the country.**

The Epiphany, known in Orthodoxy as the Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, comes on the 12th day after Christmas, and is one of the most significant feast days on the ecclesiastical calendar. One of the more splendid and reverent services of the Epiphany is the Sanctification of the Waters service, accompanied by the Tossing of the Cross into the Waters, annual conducted at port

sides, along rivers, lakes and reservoirs.

The Greek high court merely ruled that “urgent public interest” justified the measure, which the government said was aimed to prevent exposure to the Covid-19 virus. The great services for Christmas Day and New Year’s Day allowed a certain number of worshipers inside cathedrals and chapels based on the floor size of each individual church, along with the mandatory wearing of face masks and distancing between worshipers.

However, **on Saturday the government announced a complete ban on Church-going for the faithful on the Epiphany**, celebrated on Wednesday.

The Holy Synod of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Greece announced that it will comply with the previous regime imposed, while bemoaning the fact that Friday’s decision was taken without any consultation with the Church’s leadership.